

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

P. O. Box 267, 201 Veterans Dr., Columbus, TX 78934

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March 4 & 5, 2023

Second Sunday in Lent

Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Deacon of Word and Service			Sandye Fletcher
Youth & Family Specialist			Stephanie Polasek
Music Minister			Robert Eaton
Congregational Chair			Donna Maas
St. Paul Christian Learning Academy Director			Briana Bedford
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			Tomasa Rosales
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator			DyAnn Lauzon
Organist			Elena Holub

MISSION STATEMENT: Love God, Love Neighbor (Luke 10:27)

VISION STATEMENT: We will work to strengthen and grow closer in relationship to God and to one another.

- *As we enter into a sacred time and space, a friendly reminder to please set your cell phone to vibrate.*
- ***We want to welcome all of our guests today and thank you for worshipping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.***
- *Hearing Assist devices are available for those who need assistance in hearing worship service better. Please see a person in the Sound Room (Usher Room) to request the use of a device during worship.*

* This symbol indicates that the congregation is invited to stand physically or in spirit.

INTRODUCTION

During Lent we journey with all those around the world who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. In today's gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and Spirit. At the font we are given a new birth as children of God. As God made a covenant with Abraham, in baptism

God promises to raise us up with Christ to new life. From worship we are sent forth to proclaim God's love for all the world.

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE PADS

(Ushers will be handing out Attendance Pads during the announcements. Please be sure to sign your name and contact information.)

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who journeys with us these forty days, and sustains us with the gift of grace.

C Amen.

P Let us acknowledge before God and one another our need for repentance and God's mercy, first privately then together publicly.

Silence for reflection and private confession of personal sins, then join in with combined voices this printed confession.

P Holy God,

C we confess to you our faults and failings. Too often we neglect and do not trust your holy word; we take for ourselves instead of giving to others; we spoil rather than steward your creation; we cause hurt though you call us to heal; we choose fear over compassion. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, as we seek to follow in your way of life. Amen.

P Hear the good news: God so loved the world that God gave the only Son, so that all may receive life. This promise is for you! God embraces you with divine mercy, ☩ forgives you in Christ's name, and revives you in the Spirit's power.

C Amen.

* **HYMN ELW - #448 "This Is the Spirit's Entry Now"**

1. This is the Spirit's entry now; the water and the word, the cross of Jesus on your brow, the seal both felt and heard.

2. This miracle of life reborn comes from the Lord of breath; the sinless one from life was torn; our life comes through his death.

3. Let water be the sacred sign that we must die each day to rise again by his design as followers of his way.

**4. Renewing Spirit, hear our praise for your baptismal pow'r
that washes us through all our days. Come, cleanse again this hour.**

Text: Thomas E. Herbranson Music: North American traditional; arr. hymnal version
Text © Thomas E. Herbranson Arr. © 2006 Augsburg Fortress

* **GREETING**

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C And also with you.

* **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P O God, our leader and guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

FIRST READING: Genesis 12:1-4a

A Our first reading is from Genesis, chapter 12, verses 1-4a.

God's call of Abram and Sarai has a clear purpose — that through them all the families of the earth would gain a blessing. As they set out on their journey, they are accompanied by promises of land, nation, and a great reputation.

The reading begins:

¹The LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." ^{4a}So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

A The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 121

A The Psalm today is Psalm 121. We will read the Psalm responsively. The congregation will please respond by reading the words in bold print.

¹lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?

²My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth.

³The LORD will not let your foot be moved nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.

⁴Behold, the keeper of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep;

⁵the LORD watches over you; the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

⁶the sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

⁷The LORD will preserve you from all evil and will keep your life.

**⁸The LORD will watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth
forevermore.**

SECOND READING: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

A Our second readings is from Romans, chapter 4, verses 1-5 and 13-17.

In the person and example of Abraham we discover that a right relationship with God does not involve earning a reward from God but entails trusting God's promises. Abraham is the forebear and model for both Jews and Gentiles, because we too trust that ours is a God who gives life to the dead.

The reading begins:

¹What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." ⁴Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. ¹³For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. ¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations") — in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

A The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

A Please stand as you are comfortable for the gospel.

* **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:** (Sung)



* **GOSPEL:** John 3:1-17

A curious Pharisee visits Jesus by night to learn from the teacher his friends reject. Jesus speaks to him about life in the Spirit and the kingdom of God.

P The holy gospel according to St. John, chapter 3, verses 1-17.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

¹Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." ³Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

* **HYMN ELW - #451 "We Are Baptized in Christ Jesus"**

- 1. We are baptized in Christ Jesus, we are baptized in this death;
that as Christ is raised victorious, we might live a brand new life.
And if we have been united in a dreadful death like his,
we will all be reunited, for he lives.**
- 2. In the water and the witness, in the breaking of the bread,
in the waiting arms of Jesus who is risen from the dead,
God has made a new beginning from the ashes of our past;
in the losing and the winning we hold fast.**

- 3. Glory be to God the Father, glory be to Christ the Son,
glory to the Holy Spirit, ever three and ever one;
as it was in the beginning, glory now resounds again
in a song that has no ending. . . . Amen.**

Text: John C. Ylvisaker

Music: John C. Ylvisaker

Text and Music © 1985 John C. Ylvisaker

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS *(Sunday, 9:00 AM only)*

See Insert

* **APOSTLES' CREED *(Saturday, 7:00 PM only)***

A With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

C I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

A O God, you so love your church. Continue to raise up leaders who care for your people. Bless lay theologians, seminary and college professors, and all who are called to the ministry of teaching, that they form and inspire us for the work of the gospel. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

A O God, you so love the world. Uphold leaders who resist tyranny and oppression. Strengthen organizations that promote peace and harmony. Direct their work to alleviate human suffering and to address its root causes, especially in Ukraine. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

A O God, you so love your people. Draw near to all who live with mental illness, depression, or addiction, and accompany them in healing and recovery. Hear the cries of those who look to you in their distress. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

A O God, we pray for the families and friends of Claude Jacobs, Joe Gonzalez, Jason Elston and Chris Thraen. Be with them and comfort them during this difficult time. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

A O God, we pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Helen Hammack; Zelda Lanford; Donna Green; Rita Noska; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you (*Pause*). Merciful God,

C receive our prayer.

A O God, we pray for all those battling cancer that they may know comfort and strength. (*Pause for those we are praying for.*) Merciful God,
Barbara Farley; Laura Harris; Todd Foster; Cher Marino; Cindy Tanner; Joe Reck; Melinda Rodiek; Melda Coleman; Donna Culton; Nancy Hartmann; Lydia Rojas; Catherine Poppe; Larry Stolar; Vivian Fortenberry; Rick Davis; Mack Machacek; Darryl Stancik; Jerry Ordner; Michael Yancey; Bubba Bencal; Al Gene Canik; Jane Venghaus Taylor; George Wright; Sandy Mosley; Charlene Tesch; Cynthia Coufal; Jeffrey McDaniel; Karen Bailiff; Julian Divin; Nancy Biers; Angie Beggs; Pam Potter; Charlie Hammock; Brad Bryson; Lynette Frnka; Riana Jamison; Jenna Escamilla; Margaret Ortiz; Keith Korth; Jodi Sebesta; Cathy Siglow; Paul Casinger; Fran Gillett; DeQuincy Lister; Angela Mazoch; Lily Presswood; Denise Lange; Doug Mason; Dr. Tom Hancher; Joe Berry; Gracie Brune; Margaret Rogers; Leonard Kahlden; Curtis Wallin; Megan Burch; Lisa Grazier; Phyllis Behrend; Jessica Mauchlen; Donna Tiner; Libby Divin; Diane Brooks; Bob Loy; Stanley King; Monty Gillett; Dawn Foster; Edward Halcolm; Amber Smith Kutach; Louis Camacho; Melvin Schobel; Janet Greene; Sabrina Galindo; Debbie Grimes; Horst Traub; Margie Fisk; Preston Carter; Penny Miller; Carl Hahn; Megan Cain; Amanda Fuchs; Cyndi Wallace; Karen Broussard; Donna Young; Sharon Heimann; and Brenda Baker.

C receive our prayer.

A O God, we pray for all expectant mothers, and especially for:
Magen Schindler Altieri; Katie Pagel Walcik; Kelsey Kethan McNeely; Montana Appelt; and Dina Anton de Espinoza that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace. Merciful God,

C receive our prayer.

A O God, we pray for all those who reside in care facilities and the homebound that they receive your caring and compassion. (*Pause for those we are praying for.*) Merciful God,
Joey Denby; Edwin Oevermann; Paul Minar, Sr.; Bobby Zajicek; Adrian Fritsch; Verna Coufal; Doug Hill; John Zwiegel; Robert Saunders; Coy Dell Schindler; Barbara McMath; Linda Munos Rodgers; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Delores Purcell; Jane Booker; Pat Brasher; Curtis Berger; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Ronnie Rogers; Joyce Dehmer; Donna Dehmer; and Carolyn Renz.

C receive our prayer.

A O God, we pray for all law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and active duty military personnel that they are protected and kept safe. (*Pause for those we are praying for.*) Merciful God,

Law enforcement officers: Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Johnny Kovar; Abigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Luke Kanz; Bruno Flores; Zane Weido; Josh Jones; as well as Donnie Templeton and Jason Templeton who are also fire fighters. For all fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers and 9-1-1 dispatchers, especially Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Garrett Flores; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Randy Wendt; Travis Neuendorff; Brenda Henkes; and Jan Willette, as well as those active duty military members including Brian Anderson; Michael Graham; Bryan Kubena; Brad Bergfeld; Cody Jowers; Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Ryan Neisner; Anthony D'Angelo; Dalton Kapel; Kindra Dawson; William Phillips; and Kevin Gonzalez.

C receive our prayer.

A O God, we pray for the church throughout the world. May we all proclaim the good news of your love effectively. We ask, especially, that you would bless the ministry of our sister congregations Cristo Rey and Iglesia Cristiana Camino de Santidad in Peru, all Missionaries, especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic. Merciful God,

C receive our prayer.

A O God, you so love your saints. As our ancestors in the faith have been a blessing to us, so inspire us by their example of holy living to be a blessing to those who come after us.
Merciful God,

C receive our prayer.

P We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

C Amen.

* **PEACE**

P The peace of the risen Lord be with you always.

C And also with you. (*Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.*)

(We will be collecting offerings before and after worship each week. This includes Power of One dollars.)

60 SECONDS OF STEWARDSHIP

OFFERING and POWER OF ONE

"Power of One" is a ministry sponsored by your Stewardship Team. We are asking each and every one of our members to give \$1.00 above what your normal giving would be. We are asking each member to place this \$1.00 bill or change in the offering plate each week. The team is also inviting all children to participate to develop the habit of giving as part of their

worship experience. Parents, a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar bill, any of these will do to help your children develop a habit of giving. These "Power of One" dollars will be used to support local ministries and ministries abroad. The purpose of this ministry is to demonstrate that something as small as one dollar can be used to make a difference in the lives of others.

* **OFFERTORY** (Sung)



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles-sing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u -



nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

* **OFFERING PRAYER**

P God of good gifts, receive these and all our offerings as we present them in faithful service for the sake of your gospel. Prepare our hearts to receive you in this meal as you pour out your very presence through Christ Jesus, the wellspring of eternal life.

C Amen.

* **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

* **LORD'S PRAYER**

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

* **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P Come and receive the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire.

C Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION (Kneeling at Rail)

{You will be coming forward to the rail for distribution. **All are welcome for communion.** You will be ushered down the center aisle beginning in the front. Fill in at the railings starting at the side and work your way around to the center, then kneel if you are able. Pastor will hand out the bread. If you wish to have a gluten-free wafer, please tell Pastor "Gluten-free, please." Afterward, you will choose either wine or white grape juice from the individual cups in the tray – white grape juice in the center with wine surrounding. An acolyte follows with an empty tray for you to place your empty individual cup. After receiving communion, please remain at the rails until Pastor has dismissed the entire table with a blessing. Please return to your seat by the side aisles.}

* **BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION**

P Now may the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C Amen.

* **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P Embodied God, at your table, we have tasted the goodness of Jesus. With the eyes of our hearts open to your promise, empower us to hear the needs of our neighbors and touch the world with your love.

C Amen.

* **BLESSING**

P God, the giver of love, ☩ Christ, the resurrection and the life, and the Holy Spirit of rebirth bless you in this Lenten journey.

C Amen.

* **HYMN ELW - #660 "Lift High the Cross"**

REFRAIN:

*Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred name.*

1. **Come, Christians, follow where our captain trod,
our king victorious, Christ, the Son of God. REFRAIN**
2. **All newborn servants of the Crucified
bear on their brows the seal of him who died. REFRAIN**
3. **O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
as thou hast promised, draw us all to thee. REFRAIN**
4. **So shall our song of triumph ever be:
praise to the Crucified for victory! REFRAIN**

CCLI Song #5169 Words: George William Kitchin; rev. Michael Robert Newbolt Music: Sydney Hugo Nicholson
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* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace born again in baptism. C **Thanks be to God, and we will.**

POSTLUDE

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USHERS: SAT: Harvey Poenitzsch; Audrey Rester; Janeen Venghaus; Emily Frank

SUN: David Johnson; Byron Marburger; Brad Hajdik; Debbie Yancey

LAY READERS: SAT: Audrey Rester

SUN: Sharon Johnson

ACOLYTES: SAT: Henry Jones

SUN: Paisley Stancik

SOUND: Robert & Sydney Eaton

ALTAR GUILD: Dyana Booker and Sharon Johnson

WELCOME: No matter our circumstances, "[our] help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2, NRSV). We gather to worship our loving Creator. Welcome to St. Paul.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Sandy and Ken Cherniss in thanks for God's many blessings and in celebration of their 42nd wedding anniversary on March 7.

We extend our Christian sympathy to Todd Jacobs and family for the loss of his father Claude Jacobs who passed away this past week and also to Ed Thraen and family for the loss of his father Chris Thraen. May God comfort them during their time of loss.

Welcome to our New Members! This weekend we are receiving the following new members into our St. Paul Lutheran Church family: Tiara Flores and daughter Lilly; Eddie & Debbie Hernandez; Chuckie and Hollie Jobb and daughter Calleigh Barrett; and Joseph & Elizabeth Smith and daughters Hannah & Aimee. Be sure to introduce yourself and give them a big St. Paul welcome! ☺

COLLECTION OF OFFERING: Offering for the worship services is collected before and after worship. Offering bowls are placed in the back entrance and inside the side sanctuary door for you to place your offering in. This includes "Power of One" dollars.

Amount needed for average weekly budgeted expenses: \$8,405.00

Attendance: Feb. 25 & 26, 2023 – 187

Contributions: Feb. 25 & 26 – \$5,316.58

Power of One: Feb. 25 & 26, 2023 – \$36.00

Building Fund: Feb. 25 & 26 – \$98.23

Attendance: Wed., March 1, 2023 – 50

Contributions: Wed., March 1 – \$1,215.00

Power of One: Wed., March 1, 2023 – \$15.00

Building Fund: Wed., March 1 – \$50.00

Thank you to those who contributed to last week's offerings. Loving God/Loving Neighbor.

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., March 1 – **69 Total**

BLAST/Confirmation: 48

Adult Bible Study: 2

Support Staff: 19

ATTENTION: Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.

► **Children's Activity Bags** are available for use by our young members and guests! You can find them on the coat hooks in the coat area of the narthex. After worship, **please place the used activity bags and their contents in the receptacle in the narthex.**

Thank you! ☺

Offering Envelopes are HERE!! Our offering envelopes *finally* arrived! You can find them in the narthex in alphabetical order according to your last name. If you have any questions, please let the church office know. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we waited for the envelopes. ☺

Attendance Pads Reminders: Thank you to everyone for doing such a good job signing the attendance pads each week when you attend worship! Our records are more accurate when

you sign the attendance pads. Here are a couple of things that will help get our records even more accurate and up-to-date: **1) When signing in, please write everyone in your family who is attending worship.** When you write "John Doe Family", we do not know how many people that is and we don't know who exactly attended worship. Was it John, Sue and Sally Doe, or the whole family of John, Sue, Jim, Tom and Sally Doe? **2) Please include your address and phone number.** This is helpful especially when we have guests signing in. When they see the members writing addresses and phone numbers, guests are more likely to do the same. We like to welcome our guests by sending them a card after their visit. That is hard to do when we do not have contact information. It is also a way for us to keep up with our members when they have a change of address or phone number. Thank you for taking the time to do these items. Our staff and volunteers who take care of the personal records and oversee attendance records greatly appreciate your help.

+ The **Women of JOY Bible Study** group will begin a **new study on Monday, March 6, 2023 at 6:00 PM** at the Hackfeld Family Room (3234 FM 109, Columbus, Texas). They will be studying **Bold: A Study of Praying Bible Women: Six Praying Women, One Faithful God** by Rachel Risner. You can purchase the paperback book on Amazon for \$14.97. For more information about the group, please contact Gerri Hackfeld at 979-732-4711. +

Peru Team Drive-Thru Fundraiser!! Our Peru Mission Trip Team is having a drive-thru dinner fundraiser on **Tuesday, March 21, 2023** at The Lighthouse from **5:00-7:00 PM**. The menu will be: Chicken Fried Steak; Twice Baked Potatoes; Broccoli Salad; Grilled Vegetables (green beans, carrots, yellow & zucchini squash); Dinner Roll; and Pineapple Upside Down Cake. Tickets are \$13 each and are **pre-sale only**. They are available from any Peru Team member or at the church office. **Deadline to purchase tickets is Wednesday, March 15, 2023.**

SR. EXPLORERS ARE REACHING OUT: On **Wednesday, March 22, 2023**, we will adventure to Reach Unlimited in Cypress, Texas. Reach Unlimited is for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Their mission is to provide a home where these individuals can live a life full of joy, purpose and accomplishment in a safe and caring environment. Founded in 1983, they give tours one day per month. We will dine for a lite lunch at the facility with some of the residents. We will have some time for their gift shop. We may stop on the way home for a second course or dessert. That extra food stop would be your only expense. We will depart the church at 10:30 AM and should return around 3:30 PM. **Please sign up in the narthex (foyer) by Sunday, March 19, 2023.** Please call Kevin Page with any questions at 979-732-0845.

Habitat for Humanity Homeowner Application Workshop – The next Habitat for Humanity Homeowner Application Workshop will be held on **Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 6:00 PM** and again on **Saturday, March 25, 2023 at 9:00 AM**. Both of these meetings will be held at First United Methodist Church Family Life Center, 419 Washington St., Columbus, Texas. ***Attendance needed at ONE session to receive an application for a Habitat home.*** If you have any questions, please contact Colorado County Habitat for Humanity at 979-732-5677 or at chfh96@gmail.com.



Calling all actors, actresses and play production folks! It is time, once again, to sign up for the Good Friday drama. The drama will be performed **Good Friday, April 7, 2023** at the **7:00 PM** service. Please see the sign-up sheet in the narthex (foyer). We need actors and actresses (22 cast parts) as well as people to help with lighting, set design/props, costumes and set construction. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Alan.

♪♪♪ If you have a child ages 2nd grade – high school interested in being part of the **Children's Choir for Easter Sunday** April 9, 2023 **at the 9:00 AM service**, please sign the sign-up sheet in the narthex (foyer). Practice will be held after BLAST from 6:30-7:00 PM. If you have any questions about the choir, please contact Robert Eaton at 281-881-4497. ♪♪♪

SUMMER CRAFTING CAMP: This summer we will be having a Summer Crafting Camp the first week of June. **We are in need of the following items:** 1) *Cardboard tubes from paper towels;* 2) *Crayons* – broken pieces are great! (no matter the size). Items may be dropped off in the church office between now and the end of May. If you have any questions, please contact Debbie Eaton at 512-757-2251. Thank you!



Habitat for Humanity: The Outreach Team is in search of a Team Leader to represent St. Paul Lutheran Church for Habitat for Humanity. The churches in our community coordinate and build a couple of houses a year for our neighbors in need. ***We need someone to represent St. Paul and be the liaison between Habitat for Humanity and our congregation.*** You do not have to build the house yourself, but help coordinate our efforts. Please let Kevin Page know (979-732-0845) if you are interested or have any questions. Thank you, and thank you, God, for our most generous church family!

♥ ***Grief Support Group:*** Are you experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of friend who has moved? The Grief Support Group is a place to share and discuss these issues with other individuals. The group meets the **third Thursday of each month from 5:30-6:30 PM in the church library**. For questions or more information, contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Today (March 5) –	12:00 PM – Evangelism Team New Member Lunch
Mon., March 6 –	9:30 AM – Staff Meeting
	1:00 PM – Deacon Sandye to TLC
	6:00 PM – Evangelism Team (library)
	6:00 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (Hackfeld Family Room)

Tues., March 7 – 9:00 AM – Pastor Alan to Deanery
 12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
 5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)
 6:30-8:00 PM – The Gathering

Wed., March 8 – 9:00 AM – CLA Chapel
 10:00 AM – Deacon Sandye to Columbus Oaks
 2:00 PM – Deacon Sandye to The Oaks
 4:30 PM – Lenten Worship
 4:30 PM – Confirmation (2nd year)
 5:00-6:30 PM – Soup & Sandwich Meal (Lighthouse)
 5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation (1st yr.), Adult Class, & HS Youth

Thurs., March 9 – 10:00-11:30 AM – Manna for Moms (Lighthouse)
 5:00 PM – Worship Team (Lighthouse)
 6:30 PM – Peru Team (library)

Fri., March 10 – 10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)

Sat., March 11 – 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

Next Sun., March 12 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School
 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Wednesday, March 1, 2023 George Herbert, hymnwriter, died 1633

An excellent scholar, Herbert served briefly in the English parliament, then became a parish priest. He was known for devoted care of his parishioners, as well as for writing poetry and hymns, including "Come, my way, my truth, my life." He died at age 40.

Thursday, March 2, 2023 John Wesley, died 1791; Charles Wesley, died 1788; renewers of the church

These brothers led a revival originally intended to remain within the Church of England, one that involved frequent communion and advocacy for the poor. Except for a brief time in America, they worked in England. Charles was also a prolific hymn writer. After their deaths, their work led to the formation of the Methodist Church.

Tuesday, March 7, 2023 Perpetua and Felicity and companions, martyrs at Carthage, died 202

Vibia Perpetua, a noblewoman, and Felicity, an enslaved woman, were catechumens at Carthage, northern Africa. They, with four other catechumens, had defied the Roman emperor who had forbidden conversions to Christianity, and were put to death in the amphitheater.

Friday, March 10, 2023 Harriet Tubman, died 1913; Sojourner Truth, died 1883; renewers of society

Harriet Tubman, born into slavery, helped about 300 others to escape slavery until the institution was abolished. Sojourner Truth, whose birth name was Isabella, was freed after slavery was

abolished, and discerned a call to be a preacher. Taking the name Sojourner Truth, she set out on an evangelistic journey, where people found her testimony to be deeply moving.

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SERVICE OVERVIEW: QUESTIONS COME TO LIGHT

What is it about the night that invites questions? As our head rests on the pillow and shadows stretch out on the bedroom wall, questions, like field mice, begin to emerge from the nooks and crannies of our mind. At first, the questions are utilitarian: Did someone let the dog out this evening? Are the kids' lunches packed for school? When am I going to get to the grocery store this week? And then, without warning, the questions morph: Is Grandma going to recover from this illness? Why are my prayers so short these days? Does Jesus really care about us—about me? At this point we know that night has truly descended. Truth uttered in darkness. Naked honesty feels much safer, much less exposed when light's reach seems a day way.

Maybe that is why we can relate to Nicodemus. He visited Jesus at night. With shadows dancing in the torchlight, Nicodemus makes his way to Jesus, beset by questions he can ask only under cover of darkness. Though the darkness is Nicodemus' security blanket, he is irresistibly drawn to the light. Not just any light: Jesus, the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome. As people filled with our own questions, we follow in the furtive footsteps of Nicodemus, falsely believing our naked honesty will remain hidden in the gloom of night. But the Spirit, through the light of Christ, calls us out from the shadows, and in fact, exposes us to the brilliance of God's love - a love that meets our questioning hearts with nothing less than life eternal.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Today, we sneak away with with Nicodemus as he visited Jesus in the night. It's dark, and we are unsure of what we will discover, but we know we are headed for the light of Easter. Welcome to worship! Join the people of God in prayer, in praise, in word, and in meal.

Nicodemus wants to know what it means to be born again. Until the nineteenth century, the church understood this term as referring to baptism. During Lent, some are prepared for Easter baptism. We as the community, as Martin Luther says, daily crawl back to the font to be renewed in the promises of this second birth.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, which meant he was extremely well educated. In fact, he was an esteemed Pharisaic leader, extensively trained to be called upon when holy interpretations needed to be made. Still, he needed more. He traveled in the dead of night to meet with the rabbi who had been causing a stir. Their conversation is the gospel's first discourse about the identity and significance of Jesus. The exchange leaves Nicodemus speechless. In discussing the Spirit of God, Jesus is presented to a Jewish religious authority as the Son of God who brings life to the world.

Being a religious authority with a lot of clout is one thing, but what about us? Do you see yourself as being called by Jesus to minister to others? What do you do for a living? How can you assess

your call in light of your career, gifts, and skills? The point is that no matter how much we learn, there is always room to grow when it comes to life in Christ.

What does all of this mean for you? If you have not yet started a Lenten discipline, consider starting one. Do not let “holy time” be dictated by “human time.” In other words, it doesn’t matter if you can’t attend St. Paul’s Wednesday Lent services or participate in a formal bible study. The theme of Lent is Lent! Jesus told us on Ash Wednesday to be with God in private. Spend time. Ask questions. Pray. Even if you’ve never done anything like that outside of a church service, the invitation is there. Jesus reveals himself to all and asks all of us to follow Him. The same call is extended to everyone – everywhere – of every ability.

KID STUDY:

In the Bible today, we learn about a man named Nicodemus who came to Jesus late one night, because he was hungry. No, he wasn't looking for a late night snack; he was hungry for spiritual food. He was hungry for the truth about the kingdom of God. He came to Jesus because he had questions and he knew that Jesus would have the answers. He was confused when Jesus told him he could be born again. How can a grown man be born again? Jesus went on to explain to Nicodemus that a person is "born again" when the Spirit of God enters into his heart. The Holy Spirit lets us have spiritual life, and we are born again in Christ. And that's what it means to be born again. God loved the world so much that He sent Jesus! The blessed and beautiful truth of the Gospel is that we do not have to do anything special in order to receive new life. We only have to believe.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

This is the faith of Nicodemus, maybe like the faith of you and me, and it is in a God who saves us despite what we think we know. Who works despite our disbelief, beyond our best logical arguments, to bring the dead to life, call into existence that which does not yet exist, and to make all things, everywhere, new. - Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber

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Next Week's Theme (March 11 & 12): Woman at the well

Next Week's Scriptures (March 11 & 12):

First Reading: Exodus 17:1-7

“Water from the rock in the wilderness.”

Psalm: Psalm 95

“Let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.” (Ps. 95:1)

Second Reading: Romans 5:1-11

“Reconciled to God by Christ's death.”

Gospel: John 4:5-42

“Baptismal image: the woman at the well.”